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Internationalization of the Social Sciences

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Internationalization of the social sciences rests on the setup of international scientific infrastructures, networks, and research agendas. Yet it has also stimulated discussions on academic dependency and the need for the indigenization of theories and methods. This book traces phenomena that accompany the internationalization of social sciences in different parts of the world. Contributions from East Asia, India, Russia, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, South Africa, and Latin America offer manifold perspectives on the pathways and desiderata of internationalization and make this volume an important basis for future debates.

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Publishing a book is not for free. Since we discreetly used the money we received from the European Commission, we should mention this here. However, though the publication rules of the Directorate General for Research demand the formulation of »policy recommendations« we should admit here that this book does not contain any. Still, we can recommend European and other »policy makers and stakeholders«, as they

like to be called in European jargon, to read this book. It contains many policy recommendations because there are none.

Michael Kuhn and Doris Weidemann

Internationalization of the Social Sciences: Introduction

MICHAEL KUHN, DORIS WEIDEMANN

Approaching Internationalization

In a world of economic, technical, and financial globalization any question about the internationalization of the social sciences might easily appear as outdated and superfluous. It is obvious that since their inception in nineteenth-century Europe, social sciences have spread internationally and are now firmly established in scientific institutions, university curricula, and disciplinary organizations around the world. Social scientists today are linked through global networks and associations, international journals, and travel. If we take internationalization to refer to scientific activities (research, publication, travel, communication, funding) that transcend national borders, there is no doubt that the internationalization of the social sciences is a firmly established reality. Still, internationalization refers not to a state or final stage of development but signifies an ongoing process. It is the nature of this process, its preconditions, deviations, and possible future that this book is interested in.

The contributions by scholars from different parts of the world that are collected in this volume demonstrate that this process neither rests on universally shared goals nor on uniform rules and point out the multiple paths, contradictions, and conflicts internationalization implies. They also raise questions concerning academic power structures and claims to universal knowledge that touch on the epistemological foundations of social sciences in general—questions that, we believe, are central to future debates on international collaboration in the social sciences.

Internationalization is usually considered a desirable development. It has therefore in recent years been heavily promoted in the social sciences. The European Union, for example, provides huge amounts of research funds for international social research. National governments and funding organizations likewise stress the »international dimension« as an indicator of high-quality research and encourage international cooperation. There are several reasons for the increased attention to international research:

- In an era of globalization knowledge about foreign societies and policies has gained importance, especially since the anticipated arrival of a »multipolar« world makes knowledge about different regions indispensable. Sometimes national institutions simply wish to extend their knowledge about neighboring countries or look for »best practice« examples to solve local problems. Social sciences contribute to an understanding of foreign social realities; at the same time they also provide the analytical categories—such as »modernization«, »globalization«, or »multipolarity«—that allow conceptualizing international change and its effects in scientific discourse and beyond.
- As social phenomena—for instance, the production and distribution of wealth, migration, or identity formation—increasingly develop a global dimension, research needs to »go international« to sufficiently understand them. In this respect, the internationalization of research is a by-product of the globalization of social realities.
- Political aims of internationalizing research are less often addressed as they interfere with the ideology of »disinterestedness« of science (Merton). Yet, as the case of the former Soviet Union shows, developing international research ties is also a means to strengthen political alliances—a motive that also underlies current research funding policies, especially the inception of international mobility programs.
- Internationalization is intrinsically linked to scientific goals: taking research findings and theories across national borders tests their robustness and validity. The investigation of cross-national variation helps to increase knowledge and identify moderating factors and limits of general theories. The ultimate aim is to arrive at universally valid knowledge and theories, and it is this goal that has implemented an international orientation of the sciences from their beginning.
- Finally, another motive arises at the interface of political and scientific goals of scientific excellence: internationalization makes a broader talent pool available, and the hope to attract the best scholars worldwide to join their expertise in a certain project promises to en-

hance the quality of scientific outcomes and to strengthen local competitiveness on global (scientific and economic) markets.

Despite these factors, the internationalization of the social sciences is lagging behind developments in the natural sciences, which is indicated by the fact that most research is carried out within the confines of national borders and much of its results are published in national languages (other than English). This is especially true for large countries, such as Germany, France, Russia, or Brazil, that show a considerable degree of self-sufficiency (Crawford/Shinn/Sörlin 1993: 4; Hakala 1998). In general, the close entanglement of social sciences and national states that Wallerstein et al. (1996) observe (and criticize) has counteracted internationalization trends. As a result, career paths, funding, and education in the social sciences are still predominantly national (Crawford et al. 1993).

Because internationalization is linked to scientific as well as to political concerns and has recently been propelled by the growing influence of non-Western science communities, the internationalization of the social sciences has received considerable research attention. Below, we briefly review some characteristic aspects of these debates before sketching the central aims of the present publication.

Structures of the Scientific Field

A rough typology of the research field finds two general strands of argumentation that in a first attempt may be labeled »descriptive« versus »normative«. While the goal to internationalize introduces an overarching normative component into the entire discussion, research on the internationalization of social sciences still largely relies on what we call a *descriptive approach*: internationalization is studied with an interest in the quantity of international activity while its aims and contents are not generally critically discussed. Research thus focuses on international ties of researchers and research communities; on global disciplinary structures, a worldwide system of journals, conferences, and associations; or on the number of established multinational research teams. Based on this approach, bibliometric studies investigate the frequency of international coauthorship, or contributions to international journals and statistics take stock of international travel, university partnerships, amount of funding for international research, and other transnational science-related activities. This approach—that is also characteristic of current research poli-

cies and university statistics—usually takes the existing mode of universality of social sciences for granted.

A second strand of argumentation becomes visible in contributions by authors who critically discuss the fact that the social sciences that were so successfully spread around the globe are institutionally, theoretically, and methodically closely oriented at the Euro-American model and thus not readily applicable to non-Western contexts. As it focuses on the question of how to arrive at »better« or »true« international collaboration, this approach may be labeled *normative*. It rests on insights of postcolonial studies, feminist and indigenization movements that have criticized social categories, theories, and methods as essentially drenched in European thought. Debates on orientalism and gender have revealed Eurocentric and male biases of assumptions and theories. Consequently, it was questioned whether the spread of Western-dominated social science provided a sound basis for international science, and calls for »true internationalization« that would include previously excluded perspectives were voiced. According to this view, true internationalization rests on equal participation of scientists of different provenience and focuses on qualitative aspects—a new orientation of the social sciences—rather than on the quantity of traditional international ties that would only strengthen the dominance of Euro-American social sciences. Because the claim to universal validity of findings and theories cannot be upheld in a world that systematically excludes the less privileged, the inclusion of multiple experiences and viewpoints becomes mandatory. Insofar as »internationalization« can be considered a prerequisite of valid scientific theories, it gains the status of an epistemological imperative.

Despite efforts to overcome Eurocentric biases and exclusion mechanisms, many of the inherited fault-lines are still in place: this not only holds true for female and minority representation in research, but also for international structures that preconfigure and guide international collaboration. Reviewing discussions on the internationalization of the social sciences, it seems to us that Eurocentric traditions are not absent from discussions of internationalization itself. Two observations may serve as indicators:

- Calls for internationalization by researchers from the United States and Europe draw on observations that »traditional« science has exhausted its potential to explain current social and transnational phenomena. They do not usually take up postcolonial criticism of ethnocentric parochialism but diagnose insufficient knowledge about the »rest of the world« or the need to understand global phenomena that

have started to affect the »First World« (such as migration or economic global dependency). This perspective is even more pronounced in research programs, such as the European Commission's Seventh Framework Program that invites project proposals on »Europe in the world«.

- Discussions on internationalization usually ignore the fact that in many places, social sciences have never been »national« in the same sense that they have been in Europe but have possessed a strong international orientation from their beginning.

It is apparent from this short overview that in discussing internationalization a broader perspective is called for that includes the viewpoints and experiences of researchers from different research communities and countries. If much of the discussion reflects the needs and experiences of »Western« scholars, researchers from »peripheral« science communities have much to offer for a better understanding of the many facets and challenges of internationalizing social research.

Applying a popular model of global academic power structures (Alatas 2003) to the issue of »internationalization« makes systematic differences visible.¹ It is therefore worthwhile to shortly dwell on Alatas's definitions of different players in the social sciences before returning to the issue of internationalization: S. F. Alatas differentiates between *social science powers* (United States, United Kingdom, France) that have a global reach of theories and ideas and *peripheral* (academically dependent, usually Third World) social science communities that »borrow« research agendas, theories, and methods from the social science powers. A third category is made up by *semiperipheral social science powers* (e.g., Australia, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands) that hold an intermediate position: while they are dependent on the social science powers they also exert considerable influence on the peripheral science communities.

Challenges of internationalization come in a different guise to each of these communities; staying with the roughly drawn picture of the three different types of research communities, we may envision the following viewpoints:

1 As all simple typologies Alatas's model blurs the many distinctions that exist between world regions, disciplines, and local science communities. It also does not grasp dynamic developments and interrelations between communities. We believe, however, that with respect to the issue of internationalization this model may serve an important heuristic function.

To the *social science powers*, internationalization is not generally a disturbing affair. Their reach is, by definition, global in nature, and they have the means and prestige to attract scholars globally. If they integrate international dimensions, aspects, and perspectives into their research agendas they do so because it seems academically or politically rewarding to do so. They are heavily engaged in international cooperation, but it is cooperation on their own terms, in their own languages, based on their own theories and agendas. According to their understanding there is no need to internationalize since they are international already, and if they feel a need to internationalize, international cooperation will be extended. Globalization is perceived as a chance to extend international dialogue and move closer to the aim of creating universal science for global humanity. Much of the above reviewed research positions relate to the outlook of social science powers.

Because academic social sciences came as a Western transplant, *peripheral science communities* have usually seen quite a strong international (center-to-periphery) engagement in their social sciences. Since they are, using Alatas's definition, dependent on means, theories, institutions, and scholars of the social science powers, their concern is not to become international but to find ways to adjust social science agendas to local (national) concerns. Because of dependency structures, international cooperation is usually automatically understood as cooperation with social science powers. Even where there are initiatives to develop regional international networks (as within Latin America or across Asia) they are—as the chapters of this volume point out—rarely referred to as internationalization.

The *semiperipheral science communities* (especially those on the European continent) find themselves in yet another position: Endowed with strong national social science communities, solid national science traditions and national scientific languages, they face a unique dilemma: if they want to exert international influence they have to adopt language, media, theories, and agendas of the social science powers. Yet, because of their strong national traditions and local infrastructures there is a strong resistance to this way of internationalization, which is held to imply a »loss of culture« and »loss of voice«.

Even if we do not wish to follow the above line of argumentation, the center-periphery-model underlines that internationalization may hold vastly different connotations in different social science communities that are not usually addressed in internationalization discourses. Yet, it also points to the need of a more dynamic interpretation of academic relationships in an era of globalization that witnesses the emergence of new

economic and scientific powers as well as the marginalization of established communities. Some of the most significant changes were experienced by those science communities that have seen a severe degrading following the breakdown of the socialist East-bloc states. After a short-lived interest of the social science powers in research that was carried out behind the »iron curtain« (and that went along with a considerable amount of systematic exploitation), social science communities have slid toward peripheral positions and are still struggling with identity crises that (as the chapters on Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia illustrate) influence international engagement until today. At the same time, following economic development, formerly peripheral social science societies move toward the semiperiphery. Clearly, this situation holds potential for new alliances, agendas, and initiatives that have as yet escaped attention of social science communities that define themselves only with respect to the social science »center«. One of the results of this ongoing repositioning is that the position of social science powers is questioned by former (semi-) peripheral science communities. The scientific alliances of European science communities, for example, do not only change their position within the European Union but aim to challenge the United States as the leading social science power.

It is the aim of this book to capture perspectives from different (semi-) peripheral science communities that illustrate current positions and concerns and that hint at the multiple interrelations and dynamics that accompany the repositioning of actors in an era of globalization.

Background and Agenda of This Book

The conceptualization and history of this book are closely linked to two EU-funded projects that both addressed the issue of internationalization of the social sciences.² In most cases, earlier versions of the contributions to this book were presented and intensively discussed by an inter-

2 In particular, the book is the outcome of work-package 3 of the »GLOBAL SSH« project (www.globalsocialscience.org) and work-package 7 of the »ESSHRA« project (<http://esshra.tubitak.gov.tr>) that were both funded under the Framework Programme 6 of the European Commission. The GLOBAL SSH project was coordinated by the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS), and the ESHHRA project by the national science council of Turkey (TUBITAK). Some chapters of this book incorporate data collected by questionnaire surveys and focus group interviews about the social science communities in Russia, China, Japan, and Turkey in collaboration with local cooperation partners. The reports about the work-packages of both projects can be found at www.knowwhy.net.

national group of scholars on three workshops that were held in Beijing in 2007 and in Ankara and Paris in 2008. The majority of chapters were thus subjected to multilateral perspectives and have benefited from the critique, comments and ideas of all workshop participants.

Because »internationalization« contains the idea of the »national«, it is sometimes considered a phenomenon of the past that has been superseded by an era of the truly »global«. By using the term, we wish to stress our belief that national boundaries are still a valid category for much of the current education, research, and funding in the social sciences. In fact, the incessant call for carrying the endeavor of internationalization further gives proof to the diagnosis that it has not been generally achieved. The fact that book chapters largely address national science communities mirrors the national context and constitution of social science communities. With respect to the topic of internationalization this reproduces a contradiction that permeates the (national) world of social sciences and that cannot easily be overcome in academic discussions.

Still, we endorse the idea of a global approach to our subject that allows for different scientific standpoints and approaches. We have tried to address the subject not in a linear manner that would expose the idea and agenda of internationalization from a single disciplinary or geographical standpoint, but to present and interlink different standpoints without imposing an overall analytical grid or theoretical point of orientation. In a first exercise, this global approach highlights the fact that internationalization means different things from different angles and local perspectives. Yet it also helps to identify developmental patterns and shared concerns that might otherwise escape our attention. In a longer perspective, it might turn out that a global approach will establish (global) topics and working modes that are different from currently known scientific collaboration practices and that might be accompanied by new forms of organizational structures or (international) schools of thought.

It might seem ironic and even unforgivable that a book about the internationalization of the social sciences does not contain chapters on those countries that have played the most important role in internationalization efforts: the United States and Europe. Globalization and shifting hegemonic structures have doubtlessly affected science policies, research topics and higher education in these areas, as well, and the resulting changes would be an interesting topic in its own right—it has been omitted here for the purpose of giving space to less-frequently discussed research communities. Yet it follows from the current academic power structures that discussing the latter cannot ignore the former: U.S. and European interests, theories, and funding are factors that affect social

science communities all over the world, and discussing internationalization in Korea, Lebanon, or Ukraine inevitably also sheds light on »Western« internationalization practices. In a way, each chapter therefore also—often inadvertently—contributes to an understanding of the internationalization of North American and European social sciences.

This book wants to expand the scope of discussion by inviting readers to redirect their view toward the (semi-) peripheral science communities and to discover shared experiences and concerns. We thus follow Oommen (1991: 82) who recommends that »internationalization to be authentic and fruitful should consciously design for a multidirectional flow of sociology, particularly strengthening the flow from the weak to strong centres. The project should not simply aim at ›educating‹ the non-Westerners but *learning* from them.«

Intellectual learning is never a simple affair: in our case it requires openness to controversial standpoints and tolerance for varying text formats that we have not (entirely) trimmed to fit »Western« standards. In many cases, texts show traces of emotional involvement of the authors that we consider an important part of authentic testimony and that were therefore not »cleared away«. We certainly also hope that readers will find the intellectual journey enjoyable.

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